

The Children of Fatima

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Introduction

The life that the three children led after Our Lady's appearances to them is an indirect lesson from heaven for us, but a very practical one. It teaches us that when heaven appears on earth, what is of the earth is transformed by heaven's light. When Our Lady appears to a human being, that person becomes a vessel to whom the light and graces of Our Lady are entrusted. The human vessel becomes an instrument for her to continue to pour her grace and mercy into the world. We cannot have a full understanding of Guadalupe without Juan Diego or of Lourdes without Saint Bernadette.

Not only is the eye witness testimony of the visionaries important, but also their words and especially their lives. They are the reflection as of a mirror of her presence on earth!



The little chapel where Francisco, Jacinta and Lucia were baptized

These living testimonies of her and her message are very important for us, because while we cannot see Our Lady herself, we are able to see the visionaries as reflections of her. Since the children perfectly applied and realized the requests of Our Lady of Fatima, we can use their example and understanding of her message as a key to the true understanding of the spirituality of Fatima and the deepest intentions of the Immaculate Heart.

We can see how Our Lady chooses very different and even contrasting characters as her privileged children, and she uses them in different capacities to illustrate various aspects of her message.

Jacinta was a very active little girl, a whirlwind of energy, the liveliest of the three children, one who could captivate and lead the other two.

Francisco, on the contrary, was very calm, one could say phlegmatic, loving solitude and reflection.

Lucia had all the qualities of a faithful witness: thorough circumspection, excellent memory, a sense for detail and especially a deep sense of honesty.

Let us consider the spirituality of each of these three children, beloved of Heaven. We will start, in chronological order of their death, with Francisco, then reflect upon Jacinta, and finally Lucia.

Francisco Marto (June 11, 1908 – April 4, 1919)

According to Lucia's memoirs, Francisco had a placid disposition, was somewhat musically inclined, and liked to be by himself to think. Francisco preferred to pray alone, saying that this would "console Jesus for the sins of the world".

At the time of the apparitions of Our Lady in Fatima, Francisco was 9 years old. During the apparitions, he saw Our Lady, but he didn't hear her.

In October 1918, Mary appeared him and she said that she take him to heaven very soon. He insisted on walking to church to attend Holy Mass, and that the children should prostrate themselves to pray for hours kneeling with their heads on the ground as he said the angel had instructed them to do.

Francisco declined hospital treatment on April 3, 1919, and died at home the next day.



Blessed Francisco Marto

It is highly significant that Francisco could see Our Lady when she appeared in Fatima, but could not hear her speak. After each apparition, Lucia and Jacinta had to tell him what Our Lady had said. In this way, Our Lady made Francisco a different kind of witness. Accustomed to contemplation in solitude, he was able to consider in a very deep manner what he had seen, undistracted by the conversation which the other two children heard. He could concentrate entirely on contemplating the apparition itself. And this was precisely the purpose of Divine Providence. Thanks to



The house of the family of Francisco and Jacinta Marto

this divine plan, Francisco had the deepest possible understanding of the vision itself.

And what impressed him most during the apparitions?

“I loved seeing the Angel, but I love still more seeing Our Lady. What I loved most of all was to see Our Lord in that light from Our Lady which penetrated our hearts. I love God so much! But He is so sad because of so many sins! We must never commit any sins again.”

“...What is God? We could never put it into words. Yes, that is something indeed which we could never express! But what a pity it is that He is so sad! If only I could console Him!”

The theme of “consoling God” is so predominant in his short life that it became somehow his whole spirituality, the centre of his thoughts, words, and actions.

“Francisco, which do you like better: to console Our Lord, or to convert sinners, so that no more souls go to hell?” – “I would rather console Our Lord. Didn’t you notice how sad Our Lady was that last month when she said that people must not offend Our Lord any more, for He is already too much offended? I would like to console Our Lord, and after that, convert sinners, so that they won’t offend Him anymore!”



How did Francisco see himself consoling God?

Lucia writes: “He spoke little, and whenever he prayed or offered sacrifices, he preferred to go apart and hide, even from Jacinta and myself. Quite often, we surprised him hidden behind a wall or a clump of blackberry bushes, whither he had ingeniously slipped away to kneel and pray, or, as he used to say, ‘to think of Our Lord,



Francisco's headgear

Who is so sad on account of so many sins.”

“If I asked him: ‘Francisco, why don’t you ask me to pray with you, and Jacinta too?’ –

‘I prefer praying by myself, so I can think and console Our Lord, who is so sad!’”

But prayer is only one aspect. We can do even more if we try to console God in our sufferings. From time to time, Francisco used to say: “Our Lady told us, that we would have much to suffer, but I don’t mind. I’ll suffer all that she wishes! What I want is to go to Heaven!”

And Lucia said, “One day, when I showed how unhappy I was over the persecution now beginning both in my family and outside, Francisco tried to encourage me with these words: ‘Never mind! Didn’t Our Lady say that we have much to suffer, to make reparation to Our Lord and to her own Immaculate Heart for all the sins by which They are offended? They are so sad! If we can console Them with these sacrifices, how happy we shall be.’”



The bedroom at the home of the Marto family



The three children: Jacinta, Lucia and Francisco

Francisco had personal experience of the things he told Lucia and Jacinta, especially during his long sickness which ended in his death.

“I asked him sometimes: ‘Are you suffering a lot, Francisco?’ – ‘Quite a lot, but never mind! I am suffering to console Our Lord, and afterwards, within a short time, I am going to heaven!’”

He could not imagine heaven as anything other than a place where he could “console God forever.”

“It won’t be long now till I go to heaven. When I’m there, I’m going to console Our Lord and Our Lady very much.”

And his last words: “Yes, I’ll pray. But look, you’d better ask Jacinta to pray for these things instead, because I’m afraid I’ll forget when I see Our Lord. And then, more than anything else, I want to console Him.”



Blessed Francisco

When Francisco died on April 4, 1919, his parents declared: “He died smiling!”

Francisco was not a contemplative religious, but his life and example were a deep and simple guide for all contemplative souls who want to live exclusively for the glory of God. Moreover, because the world denies God His due honour and glory, there is a need to make reparation. The contemplative life is a life of love, and the first act of love is to be with the Beloved, to contemplate Him and live always in His presence. The second act of love is to repair the offence by a movement in a direction opposite to that of the offence, a movement of consolation.

When will this devotion to consoling Our Lord be complete? Never! Francisco made a thought-provoking statement: “When I’m there (in Heaven), I’m going to console Our Lord and Our Lady very



*Olimpia and Manuel Marto,
the parents of Francisco
and Jacinta*

much.” The reality is that in Heaven GOD will be our infinite consolation, our eternal light and perpetual peace, and at the same time His almighty and ineffable mercy will allow us to console Him and to give Him a special joy for all eternity. Even if the sadness of sin will not remain in eternity, the essence of the love of consolation on the part of the creature retains its meaning: the thankful heart of a child who wants to give joy to his Father and Mother and “consoles” THEM with his smile and a burning flame of love.

Through Francisco’s example in his life and death, Our Lady reminds us of the greatest commandment and gives us a means



The Basilica of Our Lady in Fatima

adapted to this sinful age to LOVE GOD again with all our heart. The devotion of CONSOLING GOD can inflame in an incalculable number of Catholics a burning love of God in our time of widespread religious indifference and hatred of supernatural truth. The ability to give consolation is a great encouragement for us poor sinners, that in spite of our misery we can really love God more and more, and our love can be active, not empty words.

Is not the Immaculate teaching us through Francisco the most profound manner of prayer, namely her own? Indeed, in her boundless compassion under the Cross, her prayer was directed to consoling her Son. So we too must find a few moments in which to be alone

with Christ exclusively to console Him, by the simple act of standing with Our Lady under the Cross. While contemporary man no longer has time for the God who created him, and is so indifferent that he finds it boring to spend an hour with Christ, we at least should show our love for Our Lord by having a little time for Him to console Him with a loving presence and compassion. But what is the outcome of such an effort? This too is demonstrated by the example of little Francisco: in a very short time his love for God had reached a high degree of perfection, and a few months later he was already allowed to see the Immaculata forever in heaven.



The tomb of blessed Francisco in the Basilica of Our Lady in Fatima

Jacinta Marto (March 11, 1910 – February 20, 1920)

According to Lucia's memoirs, Jacinta was affectionate if a little spoiled. She had a sweet singing voice and a gift for dancing.

Jacinta said she was deeply affected by a terrifying vision of Hell shown to the children at the third apparition, and deeply convinced of the need to save sinners through penance and sacrifice as the Virgin had told the children to do. All three children, but particularly Francisco and Jacinta, practiced stringent self-mortifications to this end.

In October 1918, Mary appeared to Jacinta and she said that she would take Jacinta to heaven soon. In 1919 Jacinta was ill and she was moved from one hospital to another in an attempt to save her life, which she insisted was futile. She developed purulent pleurisy and endured an operation in which two of her ribs were removed. Because of the condition of her heart, she could not be fully anesthetized, only local, and later suffered terrible pain, which she said would help to convert many sinners. On February 19, 1920, Jacinta asked the hospital chaplain who heard her confession to bring her Holy Communion and administer Extreme Unction because she was going to die "the next night". He told her that her condition was not that serious and that he would return the next day. The next day Jacinta was dead; she had died, as she had often said she would, alone.

Jacinta's body was exhumed in 1935 and again in 1951, and Jacinta's face was found incorrupt.



Blessed Jacinta Marto

Jacinta was very different from Francisco in character and temperament. Francisco, who had a contemplative soul, was struck above all by the sadness of God and Our Lady, and he wanted to console them by prayer and sacrifice.

Jacinta had a tender and affectionate heart which was seized with fright at the sight of so many souls falling into the fires of hell: “The vision of hell filled her with horror to such a degree that every penance and mortification was nothing in her eyes, if only it

could prevent souls from going there. ‘Francisco, are you praying with me? We must pray a lot to save souls from hell. So many go there! So many!’”

The dominant thought which haunted her and animated all her supernatural activity was the salvation of souls. She had an ardent thirst for their conversion, a genuine missionary zeal. She looked for sacrifices to offer for “my sinners.” She renounced her favorite pastime of folk dancing for the conversion of sinners. She always made her sacrifices with this thought, a thought which was habitual for her: to suffer for sinners, to make acts of reparation in their place,



Inside the home of the Marto family

to substitute herself for them, to obtain pardon for them and the grace of conversion.

“Jacinta, what are you thinking about?” – “About the war which is coming, and all the people who are going to die and go to hell! How dreadful! If they would only stop offending God, then there wouldn’t be any war, and they wouldn’t go to hell”.

“How much I love to suffer for love of Our Lord and Our Lady, just to give Them pleasure! They greatly love those who suffer for the conversion of sinners”.



Jacinta Marto

The greatest sufferings for her were loneliness and especially Our Lady’s revelation that she would die alone, far from her family. But she offered even this supreme sacrifice for the conversion of sinners. Thinking of this terrible night of loneliness deprived her of all consolation. On those occasions, she often said: “O Jesus! Now you can convert many sinners, because this is really a big sacrifice.”

“What are you going to do in Heaven?” – “I’m going to love Jesus very much, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, too. I’m going to pray a lot for you, for sinners, for the Holy Father, for my parents and my brothers and sisters, and for all the people who have asked me to pray for them....”

When her mother seemed sad at seeing her child so ill, Jacinta used to say: “Don’t worry, mother. I’m going to Heaven, and there I’ll be praying so much for you!”

Besides prayer for sinners, the one for whom Jacinta prayed and offered sacrifice the most was the Holy Father himself. Certainly, the Great Secret must have impressed Jacinta in a very special way: not only the vision of hell, but also the second and the third part of the secret, especially in what concerned the Pope.



The baptismal gowns of Francisco and Jacinta

“...Jacinta called out to me: ‘Didn’t you see the Holy Father?’ – ‘No.’ – ‘I don’t know how it was, but I saw the Holy Father in a very big house, kneeling by a table, with his head buried in his hands, and he was weeping. Outside the house, there were many people. Some of them were throwing stones, others were cursing him and using bad language. Poor Holy Father, we must pray much for him.’”

“Another time, Jacinta called to me: ‘Can’t you see all those highways and roads full of people, who are crying with

hunger and have nothing to eat? And the Holy Father in a church praying before the Immaculate Heart of Mary? And so many people praying with him?”

Every time she offered her sacrifices to Jesus, she added: “...and for the Holy Father.”

Jacinta died alone in a hospital in Lisbon on the twentieth of February, 1920. Many people viewed her lying in the casket before her burial and they said of her: “she seemed to be alive, with her lips and cheeks a beautiful rosy color. ...The girl was dead for three and a half days, and the odour she exhaled was like a bouquet of various flowers.”



Jacinta Marto

Without doubt, the vision of hell was one of the most important experiences in Jacinta’s spiritual life. Her simple and innocent insight allowed her to understand instantly that these awful tortures in an ocean of fire are nothing but the consequences of the sins she saw in the world. The reality of hell aroused in her not only a great generosity and love as well as an understanding of man’s wickedness, but also an understanding of God’s mercy

to send the Immaculate Heart to save poor sinners from damnation.

1. The lives and spiritual experiences of Francisco and Jacinta are a complete catechism for understanding the mystery of iniquity. Francisco received the grace to understand what sin means to God, and Jacinta herself seized its dimension: sin destroys the soul so wonderfully created by God and even yet more wonderfully restored by Christ. Sin negates all that is true, good, and beautiful in man's heart. Above all, sin is death for it annihilates the source of life and being.

The most dramatic, everlasting expression and consequence of sin is hell itself. It is the final and never ending torment of the soul in that ocean of fire, the torture of the denial of God which is the essence of sin. Instead of beauty there is eternal ugliness; instead of love, eternal hatred; instead of union, eternal separation; instead of happiness, eternal despair; instead of peace, eternal torment of conscience; instead of the everlasting friendship of heaven, eternal torture from the devils and the damned. Each detail of the vision of hell on the thirteenth of July shows another aspect of this awful reality: the fire tormenting souls within and without is the awful chastisement for having systematically and deliberately destroyed the beauty of this sanctuary which God gave us as the special gift of his love.

This eternal abyss of damnation helps us understand the catastrophe of sin. Jacinta is a living reminder for all of us of a message we should never forget: sin leads to hell! Sin brings so many, so many to hell! Nobody wants to destroy himself forever, nobody

wants to burn eternally in the fires of hell, and therefore we must not sin! Sin is the only evil, because sin leads to this eternal damnation.

2. Jacinta learned from Our Lady that she – a little girl of seven years – could save many of these poor people from the everlasting fire. She did not hesitate at all: “We must pray a lot to save souls from hell. So many go there! So many!”



Through such a program of life Jacinta became a living example for all men to follow the essential role God called them to accomplish on earth: “This is my new commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you!” We have explained the dimension of the “great commandment” in the commentary on the apparition of August 19th. Now, Jacinta became the living icon of such a life motivated entirely by this love of neighbour, and thanks to such tremendous inspiration, she – little as she was – became a great saint within two years.

Our Lady in Fatima calls for missionary souls, generous hearts who would forget about their temporary ambitions so as to be filled with one great ideal, following the example of Jacinta: “How much I love to suffer for love of Our Lord and Our Lady, just to give Them

pleasure! They greatly love those who suffer for the conversion of sinners.”

Anticipating the foundation of great Marian movements at the beginning of the twentieth century, little Jacinta demonstrates the ideal of a true “Knight of the Immaculata”, a “Legionary of Mary”, an instrument in her Immaculate Hands to save many souls from the fires of hell!

3. No doubt, the Immaculate Heart of Mary herself formed the little girl Jacinta to become an exceptional missionary, who, according to the Patriarch of Lisbon Cardinal Cerejeira, saved more souls by her many prayers and heroic sacrifices than many missionaries together all over the world at that time.

However, Jacinta had yet another role to accomplish: if Our Lady wanted to use children “to make Our Lady known and loved”, it would not only be through a message to the world. Our Lady chose Jacinta especially to be her living presence in the world. We can gather this from the very words of Lucia: “Jacinta was the one who received from Our Lady a greater abundance of grace, and a better knowledge of God and of virtue.” This deeper intimacy with the Most Holy Virgin not only transformed Jacinta’s own soul through sanctification, but somehow made her the living presence of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Through Jacinta, we can learn who Mary really is.

The Immaculate Heart of Mary herself was reproduced in Jacinta’s own heart. Because Jacinta was so small and innocent, Our Lady could enable her to participate exceptionally in the treasures of her own Heart. We can admire the heart of Jacinta,



Jacinta being held by her father after one of the apparitions of Our Lady

a heart so full of mercy towards all poor sinners whom she regarded as her own; a heart so simple and trusting that the shadows of doubt never entered within; a heart so generous that it answered all of Our Lady's requests, even the request to endure the most terrible sufferings of loneliness during her last illness; a heart to live only for the honor of the Immaculate Heart and for sinners. This total forgetfulness of herself to live entirely for her made Jacinta a perfect image of Mary's Heart in its total love towards God and men!

4. Our Lady seems to have wanted to emphasize certain details of the apparitions to the seers, because through the impression

made on the children, she could teach the rest of us to understand the importance of those details. Since Fatima is Heaven's great message for the latter times and an answer to present dangers, the vision of hell was evidently the answer of Our Lady to rising modernism, an ideology which would ignore, diminish, or even completely deny the reality of eternal damnation. Another important detail is the special concern of Jacinta for the Holy Father. This fact is more astonishing since little Jacinta hardly knew anything about the Pope or who he was. She received knowledge of the Holy Father and a special love for him directly from Our Lady herself.

The Holy Father was presented to her under the most tragic circumstances: she saw him immersed in great suffering, in the midst of the worst calamities. The vision must have been very striking and awful, because she repeated so often afterwards: "poor Holy Father." This is an expression which runs parallel to another expression of Jacinta's for certain people who made a great impression



on her and to whom she often referred: "the poor sinners." They are "poor" because they run the worst of risks: the danger of eternal ruin. If the fate of a sinner is the loss of his soul, what is the "ruin and danger of the Holy Father"?

Since the Pope is the head of the militant



The funeral of Jacinta Marto

Church, the sufferings and calamities which he would have to undergo must have something to do with the ruin and destruction of the Church. In fact, the whole ambition of the devil is twofold: the damnation of men, and the destruction of his great adversary, which threatens his tyranny on earth – the Kingdom of God, the Holy Catholic Church. And because the Church is hierarchical, the central attack against the Church will be directed against the Pope.

5. Jacinta became a champion of the most important means of conversion and sanctification of souls: apostolic prayer. We can distinguish between personal and apostolic prayer. The first is the



The incorrupt body of Blessed Jacinta Marto during the exhumations of 1935 and 1951

lifting up of our souls towards God to adore, praise, and thank Him, to ask pardon for our sins, and to obtain graces for us. The second is to ask for graces for one's neighbour, such as his conversion, his sanctification, or for anything else profitable to his soul. Our Lady had this second prayer in mind when she asked the children to pray for the conversion of sinners. Prayer to God on behalf of others is an essential part of the fulfillment of the great commandment to love one's neighbour. Jacinta's example steers us away from activism or an exaggerated use of human means in the apostolate. None of the external activities and projects of the apostolate are, of themselves, capable of converting even one soul, for conversion is firstly the work of divine grace. The work of the apostolate consists in the turning of the will, which is prone to evil, towards what is good, so that

a person who might be far from God or even openly be His enemy, might draw near to God and become His friend.

How did Jacinta pray? What were the prayers of that seven year old child? Of course, she only offered those prayers which she had received from the angel and from Our Lady herself: the prayer of the Angel, the Rosary, and beloved ejaculatory prayers. The best devotion to the Immaculate Heart is not the recitation of many prayers, but rather the simple, intimate relationship of a child to its Mother, which is best expressed through short but very fervent and frequent ejaculatory prayers. A child who loves his mother does not say many words; often a glance or a single word is enough. When he is in danger, he calls almost unconsciously: Mother!

Let us conclude that Jacinta's many little prayers were so pleasing to Our Lady that not only did Our Lady fulfill the wishes of her little seer, but she transformed Jacinta into a great saint. Certainly Jacinta prayed much more for others than for herself in her short life. Our Lady's reward should always remind us of the old rule: what you do for others, you do twice for yourself!



The tomb of blessed Jacinta in the Basilica of Our Lady in Fatima

Sr. Lucia dos Santos

(March 28, 1907 – February 13, 2005)

Lúcia's First Communion occurred at six years of age despite ten being the usual minimum. Initially, the parish priest refused because of her young age. However, Fr. Cruz, a Jesuit missionary visiting from Lisbon, interviewed Lúcia after finding her in tears that day and concluded that "she understands what she's doing better than many of the others."

After her First Confession she prayed before the altar of Our Lady of the Rosary and saw the statue smile at her. Upon receiving the Eucharist, Lúcia felt "bathed in such a supernatural atmosphere that the presence of our dear Lord became as clearly perceptible to me as if I had seen and heard Him with my bodily senses."

Lúcia's First Communion left a deep impact on her. "I lost the taste and attraction for the things of the world, and only felt at home in some solitary place where, all alone, I could recall the delights of my First Communion."



Sister Lucia

Lucia's long life was entirely dedicated to making Fatima known. She had been chosen to be the principal witness of Our Lady before the whole world, and for this purpose she received specific virtues from Our Lady. It is important to analyze these special qualities of Lucia and consider how her life became a living revelation of the message of Fatima.

As Lucia was to live almost a century as a religious and messenger of the Immaculate Heart of Mary to the world, her life was entirely different from that of her cousins. Let us first recall some facts and testimonies, and afterwards see how they are a part of the

“spirituality of Fatima” which we have to live if we want to be faithful to the Immaculate Heart.

From the time of the apparitions, Lucia was the one who suffered the most. One would expect that the privilege of such an intimacy with Our Lady would make the life of the seer a constant joy and thrilling happiness. For Lucia it was the contrary: the apparitions became a source of constant sorrow and humiliation inflicted on her by those whom she loved most: her own family and former friends who mostly followed the negative outlook of the parish priest. Such was her life in the years following the apparitions, during which she had to undergo many cross-examinations.

The greatest suffering for her was the frequent accusation that she had lied: “While there were some who admired me and con-



The family home of Lucia after renovation

sidered me a saint, there were always others who heaped abuse on me and called me a hypocrite, a visionary and a sorceress. This was the good Lord's way of throwing salt into the water to prevent it from going bad. Thanks to this Divine Providence, I went through the fire without being burned, or without becoming acquainted with the little worm of vanity which has the habit of gnawing its way into everything. They are all mistaken. I'm not a saint, as some say, and I'm not a liar either, as others say. Only God knows what I am."

At the end of the first interrogation for the canonical process she was asked a final question: "Are you quite certain that the Blessed Virgin really appeared to you?" She responded with this firm and solemn declaration: "I have the certitude that I saw her and that I am not mistaken. Even if they were to kill me, nobody could make me say the contrary."

In June of 1921, Lucia left Fatima definitely, first for college and afterwards to enter religious life. Upon arriving at college, she was introduced to others under a different name, and was obliged "never to say anything to anyone regarding the events at Fatima." For four years, day after day, she had to carry the very heavy cross of obedi-



The children of Fatima standing by the tree, upon which Our Lady appeared

ence to this command. Although it was easy for her to keep silence regarding herself, it was no doubt a heavy burden to be forbidden to speak of Fatima. It was also a sorrowful trial for Lucia that she knew nothing of what was going on at home in Fatima, for she was now totally separated from her family and heard from them very infrequently.

However, in her letters at that time to her family, we find a simple, courageous, humble, modest and thankful soul. Expressions of thanksgiving for the education she was receiving and the good example of the superiors are frequent. Canon Barthas writes that she was not free of imperfections, but if she realized that she had hurt anyone, she would immediately ask pardon very gently. Her calm



The apparitions of the Angel who prepared the children for the apparitions of Our Lady

bearing and balance was especially striking, and she always kept an even temper. There was nothing of the neurotic about her, or even of the nervous or sentimental. One of her directors declared: "I only saw her weep once, and that was when she thought of her home town."



In 1923, when she enrolling in the girls association "The Daughters of Mary", she received an extraordinary grace: "After six years of real trials, it was on this day August 26, 1923, that Our Lady for the first time came back to visit me. This was when I entered the Daughters of Mary. She said that she agreed to be my true Heavenly Mother, since I had left my earthly mother for the love of her. Again she recommended to me prayer and sacrifice for sinners, saying that a great number are damned because they have no one to pray and sacrifice for them." Although she was completely successful in hiding the fact that she was the seer of Fatima, she could not conceal her tender devotion towards her Heavenly Mother. Her Mother Superior wrote: "On numerous occasions the sisters came to tell me that she had something extraordinary with Our Lady, because when she spoke of her, she was always different from other people, and people noticed that she had an extraordinary love for the Most Holy Virgin."

In October of 1925, she entered the congregation of the Dorothean sisters, where she continued her life of simplicity and perfect obedience. Up until 1929, the majority of her fellow sisters were unaware that she was the seer of Fatima. Her daily duties were simple, and her spirituality was to put into practising the message of Our Lady by living the religious rule perfectly and giving herself



The small chapel erected in the "Valinhos" area. Our Lady unexpectedly appeared here and repeated the promise of a miracle

entirely to the Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Of the important revelations she had during this time, she faithfully and patiently “made them known” to her superiors and spiritual directors. What made her suffer the most was the general refusal to accept and to realize the requests of Our Lady, and what filled her with joy and thanksgiving was the adherence and zeal of those who propagated the devotion to the Immaculate Heart and afterwards made efforts to have Russia consecrated.



All the apparitions and revelations presented in the following chapters touched Sr. Lucia’s inner being. She wrote letter after letter and received visits from high members of the hierarchy and many priests. But even when she experienced a lack of trust or refusal, in the midst of these immense sufferings she always maintained her role, faithfully and constantly passing on heaven’s requests and messages to the ministers of Our Lord, even when those messages consisted of awful threats and announcements of the worst calamities. To pray and sacrifice herself for these intentions was the rule of her whole life!

When Jacinta’s body was transferred to the cemetery of Fatima in 1935, the local bishop ordered Sr. Lucia to write a biography of

Jacinta. Her answer reveals the degree of her spiritual life. She firmly declares that she wrote “solely and exclusively for the glory of Jesus and the Blessed Virgin,” and she continues, “I now take up this work, in spite of the repugnance I feel, since I can say almost nothing about Jacinta without speaking either directly or indirectly about my miserable self. I obey, nevertheless, the will of Your Excellency, which, for me, is the expression of the will of God. I begin this task, then, asking the most holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary to deign to bless it, and to make use of this act of obedience to obtain the conversion of poor sinners, for whom Jacinta so generously sacrificed herself.” She made the same declaration for all the other memoirs and public writings; she never wrote anything of her own initiative, but always and only on the express order of the bishop. She always had an extreme reluctance and repugnance to write, especially when it came to writing down the secrets. When she was ordered to write down the Third Secret, she even fell into a mysterious and dangerous illness.



People during the miracle of the sun (October 17, 1917)



Sister Lucia with Bishop da Silva

Sr. Lucia was always a humble religious. In 1948, she obtained the papal indult to enter the Carmelite order. The testimony of the nuns was unanimous all her life long: “She was very cheerful and very simple. Her conduct was always dignified and reserved in responding to the affability with which she was received everywhere,” testified the Mother Superior of Tuy. The numerous priests who knew her well were equally unanimous that there was nothing extraordinary in her appearance, words, or expression. She was always moderate and well balanced. “She does not like to speak about the apparitions. When she is obliged to do so, she does it with naturalness, with modesty, but with assurance....She is endowed with a very faithful, rapid, extraordinary memory. ...She shows great docility to the orders of her superiors, in which she always recognized the divine authority.” (Canon Galamba)

In all her trials, humiliations and constant sufferings her refuge was always the Immaculate Heart: “The Immaculate Heart of Mary is my refuge, especially in the most difficult hours. There I am always secure. It is the heart of the best of mothers; it is always attentive and it watches over the least of her children. How this certainty encourages and strengthens me! In her I find strength and consolation. This Immaculate Heart is the channel by which God makes the multitude of His graces pour into my soul. Help me to be grateful to her and to correspond to such great mercies. ...Our Lord told me a few days ago: “I desire very ardently the propagation of the cult and the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, because this Heart is the magnet which draws souls to Me, the fire which makes the rays of My light and My love shine over the earth, and the inexhaustible well causing the living water of My mercy to pour over the earth.”

“...Do not think I am sad, that I cannot go there. I offer this sacrifice with pleasure, because with this we save souls, and I always remember the great promise which fills me with joy: ‘I will never leave you alone. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way which will lead you to God.’” I believe that this promise is not for me alone, but for all souls who wish to take refuge in the Heart of their Heavenly Mother, and let themselves be led along the paths traced out by her. ...It seems to me that such are the intentions of the Immaculate Heart of Mary: to make this ray of light shine before souls once more, to show them once more this harbor of salvation, always ready to welcome all the shipwrecked of this world.” One can say that her life was an explanation of the GREAT MEANS of SALVATION in the latter times: MARY’S IMMACULATE HEART!



Basilica in Fatima under construction

The life of Sr. Lucia in Carmel was one of self-immolation and continuous spiritual suffering. From 1950 onwards, one can find such statements in her letters as “I am pained that the consecration of Russia has not been done as Our Lady requested it.” In 1955, Sr. Lucia was reduced to silence, and without the express permission of the Holy See, no one could meet and speak with her. As long as she was able, she had spoken and written about the trials to come. Although she was not allowed to reveal the third part of the secret, Sr. Lucia now realized that the prophecies announced in it were to be fulfilled before her eyes. Even if the disastrous realities of the Second Vatican Council and its reforms were directly concealed from her, through the visits of her relatives (amongst whom were also priests) she could sense the “diabolic wave which overflows the whole world,” and many times she spoke about “the last and final battle between the devil and Our Lady,” about the strategy of

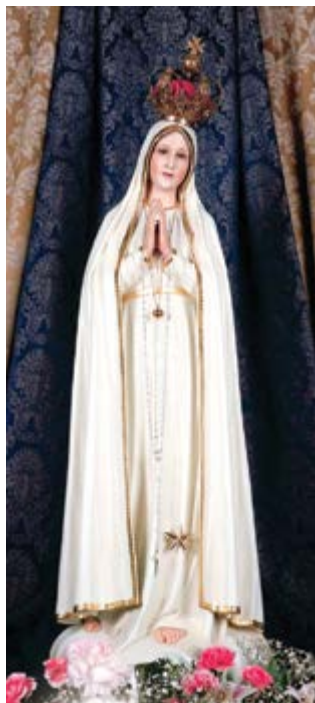
the devil “to overcome souls consecrated to God.” Knowing that the hierarchy of the Church had turned away from the requests of Our Lady, she said: “We should not wait for an appeal to the world to come from Rome on the part of the Holy Father to do penance. Nor should we wait for the call to penance to come from our bishops, nor from the religious congregations.” She not only foretold chastisements but also gave important means to overcome the forthcoming calamities: “That is why now, it is necessary for each one of us to begin to reform himself spiritually. Each person must not only save his own soul but also all the souls that God has placed on our path.” Before being reduced to absolute silence in 1974, Sister Lucia still had permission to write a certain number of letters. All of these letters address the crisis in the Church and a diabolical disorientation. She exhorts her correspondents to fidelity and vigilance against the diabolical powers at work in the world, destined to cause many people to lose the faith. In order to remain faithful, it is necessary to remember the requests of Our Lady at Fatima: to pray and make sacrifices for the conversion of poor sinners, to faithfully continue the daily recitation of the Rosary, to persevere in devotion to the Immaculate Heart, and to accomplish acts of penance. This would be the hidden life and immolation of Sr. Lucia until her death.

The life of the seers of Fatima was like a living reflection in which we can see the desires of the Immaculate Heart. She formed and guided all three of them to be an illustration of what Our Lady names “the devotion to her Immaculate Heart”. Therefore, in the measure that we follow the example of their virtues, we will sanctify ourselves, and the wonderful promises of Our Lady will be real-

ized in our own souls. From Francisco, we learned perfect love of God in the prayer of consolation; from Jacinta, we learned perfect love of neighbour by praying for the conversion of sinners. From Lucia, we will learn how to live constantly in the light of the Immaculate Heart, how we can please her, how to offer our trials and sufferings, and how best to fulfill our duties of state.



1. Our Lady of Fatima invites us to lead a similar life in and with her Immaculate Heart through the example of Sr. Lucia. If we did so, everything in our ordinary daily life would change for the better: our prayers, our contacts with our neighbour, our sacrifices, and our understanding of our role and our duties of state. All components of our lives would find harmony if they were accomplished in union with her Heart; they would become more fruitful for our salvation and the salvation of other souls, and Our Lady would find much consolation in our lives.



2. From the first apparition on May 13, 1917, Lucia, the eldest of the seers, had to undergo the brunt of the trials, sufferings, and humiliations that followed the event. Those trials were made heavier for her because they largely came from those whom she loved and respected most: her own mother and sisters, and from civil and spiritual authorities. Our Lady teaches us through Lucia that our daily life might be one of contradiction and humiliation. Our Lady foresaw terrible times in the near future when faithful Catholics would be routinely despised, ridiculed, and humiliated not only by enemies of the

Church but also from within the family of the Church. Confronted by such heavy blows, how should a Catholic behave? Sr. Lucia shows us the example. There is nothing of resentment in Sr. Lucia's behavior.

One of her great sufferings was loneliness, not only physically, as when she had to leave her home forever, but also spiritually, when she felt that nobody understood her and everyone was against her. Through every difficult trial, she never showed despair or discouragement. When things went wrong, she immediately had recourse to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and confided to her all her worries and trials: "The Immaculate Heart of Mary is my refuge, especially in the most difficult hours. There I am

always secure. It is the heart of the best of mothers; it is always attentive and it watches over the least of its children. How this certainty encourages and strengthens me! In her I find strength and consolation.”

3. Another quality of Sr. Lucia was her determination to be honest always. Sr. Lucia knew from the beginning that being absolutely true and faithful to her task would be a dangerous and exhausting undertaking. Here we have another example of the “spirituality of Fatima,” the behavior and quality of those who really want to live the devotion to the Immaculate Heart.

We have to concentrate and be entirely occupied with what heaven asks from us and fulfill it faithfully, even at great personal cost.

The other lesson we can learn from Our Lady, through Sr. Lucia, is to keep within the limits of our competence and duties, not to be occupied with examining and judging what others are doing. When Lucia saw that others did evil, she responded with prayer and sacrifices for them, but she never judged their intentions, never assumed an authority for herself for which she did not have the



grace of state. We should likewise be so eager to do what Divine Providence has given us to do that we simply have no time or interest to judge other people. The vocation of the steadfast Catholic of our times is to “be faithful until the end, and you will earn the crown of glory.”

4. How can we best live through such difficult lives in the modern world? Sr. Lucia provides a living example of behaviour for a devoted child of the Heavenly Mother, a slave of the Queen and Knight of the Immaculate Heart.

Lucia’s example, like that of Jacinta, speaks more to us than her words by providing us a living replication of the qualities of Our Lady herself. No one can please Mary if he does not imitate her virtues. No one can say that he practices devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary if he neglects to conform his heart to her Heart, his life to her life.

5. The Immaculate Heart was Sr. Lucia’s refuge and great consolation, enabling her to never despair, never give up. She received from Our Lady a deep and special understanding of the difficult times to come: the message of the great secret made her understand profoundly the final attack of the devil against the Church and souls. When writing down the Third Secret, Lucia was in agony; she was deeply affected seeing the future triumph of evil in the world and in the Church, the desertion of the good, the abandonment of the faith, and the dangers of eternal damnation for so many.

We should also meditate more often on this clear and categorical statement, as though Mary would say to us: “Whether you decide to be with me or against me, I will triumph! But I invite you to share my triumph with me, and therefore you should trust me blindly! Faithfully fulfill my will and be entirely focused on pleasing me. Then I will guide you through every dark night, trial and temptation. My Heart will then be your refuge and the way which leads you certainly to God, to holiness!”





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